

Amendments to the Claims:

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1-25 Canceled

26. (Original) A method for producing biopolymer sponges comprising the steps of:
- (a) providing an aqueous dispersion of the biopolymer;
 - (b) introducing the dispersion into a mold;
 - (c) freezing the dispersion to provide a shaped frozen dispersion;
 - (d) heating the mold and releasing the shaped frozen dispersion from the mold;
- and
- (e) drying the released frozen dispersion.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, wherein the mold is a mold for making tubes.

28. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 27,~~ A method for producing biopolymer sponges comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing an aqueous dispersion of the biopolymer;
- (b) introducing the dispersion into a mold for making tubes;
- (c) freezing the dispersion to provide a shaped frozen dispersion;
- (d) heating the mold and releasing the shaped frozen dispersion from the mold; and
- (e) drying the released frozen dispersion;

wherein the mold comprises an outer cylindrical shell having a distal closed end and proximal opened end a central block being disposed within the shell and resting on the distal closed end of the shell, whereby the block and shell form an annular space therebetween.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the central block.

30. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the outer cylindrical shell.

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31. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the mold comprises an outer cylindrical shell having a distal closed end and a proximal opened end, a mandrel for insertion into the shell, whereby the shell and the mandrel define an annular space along the longitudinal dimension of the shell and mandrel and define an open area between the base of the mandrel and the distal closed end of the shell, the open area contiguous with the annular space when the mandrel is placed in the shell.

32. (Original) The method of claim 31, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the mandrel.

33. (Original) The method of claim 31, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the outer cylindrical shell.

34. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the mold comprises a cylindrical outer shell opened at both the distal and proximal ends, a mandrel, and a piston, whereby the shell and the mandrel define an annular space along the longitudinal dimensions of the shell and mandrel, the piston insertable into and through the distal end of the shell, the piston and base of the mandrel defining an open space therebetween, the open space being contiguous with the annular space between the mandrel and shell.

35. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the mandrel.

36. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the shell.

37. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the piston.

38. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the mold comprises an array of wells defining the outer parts of the mold, a complimentary array of mold mandrels for insertion into

the wells, wherein the floor of each mold well is mounted on a piston which is slideably moveable inside the well to push the frozen dispersion out of the wells.

39. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the mandrels.

40. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the array of wells.

41. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the heating step (d) involves heating the pistons.

42. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the drying step (e) is freeze-drying.

43. (New) The method of claim 42, wherein the mold is a mold for making tubes.

44. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the drying step (e) is solvent-drying.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein the mold is a mold for making tubes.